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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
U.S. House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, D.C. 20515
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September 14, 1984

Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Recently, the committee received an indepth National Security Agency (NSA) review of the communications security (COMSEC) threat to our government and to the contractors that support our defense programs. Included in the briefing was an assessment of the vulnerabilities of our communication systems.

The committee determined that the COMSEC posture and practices of the U.S. Government are poor. The security of the nation's automated information systems presents a similar problem.

The Congress has consistently supported the development of COMSEC technology and the modernization of equipment in an effort to keep pace with communications advances and national security needs, and considerable progress has been made in these areas. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the process of securing essential U.S. communications is progressing too slowly. The advantages we hold in advanced technology, strategic policy and planning, nuclear weapons development and deployment, and numerous other vital areas are in danger. This is of great concern to the committee. The reasons cited for the existing COMSEC problems are complex and involve the basic issues of organizational structure, authority and resources.

National COMSEC policies and objectives have been difficult to formulate and even more difficult to implement. Many of the problems stem from fundamental shortcomings in the policymaking process. Our national security responsibilities need to be executed in an efficient and cohesive fashion. The committee supports the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to protect the nation's telecommunications and information handling systems.

The committee shares the view that inadequate requirements definition, unsatisfactory coupling of security and communications system architectures, and diffused funding result in overly expensive and unnecessarily complicated equipment. There are also questions concerning the resource requirements attendant to national COMSEC effort.

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The committee also shares the concern that the civil agencies of the U.S. Government do not participate in the COMSEC budgetary process and that there is no central record on COMSEC fiscal actions governmentwide, let alone a central record of nationally prioritized requirements. The committee believes that the concept of a national focal point for COMSEC requirements and funding should be examined. This approach might allow development of prioritized requirements, better contracting strategies, more effective procurement execution, and improved personnel security practices. Additionally, the economies of scale for the expensive and complex COMSEC systems required to secure modern telecommunications might be better achieved.

Consequently, the committee endorses the following basic objectives:

- An improvement in planning, development, and production strategies to enable the delivery of more COMSEC equipment to the field sooner and at a lower cost;
- An examination of the organization and focus of the national COMSEC policymaking structure with an eye toward improved requirements definition, prioritization, and more efficient funding;
- Significant near-term improvement in the availability of secure telephones, governmentwide;
- Rectification of the most critical security deficiencies in strategic command and control and other sensitive communications systems;
- Increased support of a comprehensive program to make computerized data networks and associated office automation equipment more secure; and
- Establishment of a vigorous national program to assess the full extent of U.S. communications vulnerabilities and a comprehensive assessment of the requirements for corrective action.

Accordingly, the committee requests that you, as the executive agent of the government, aided by the Director, National Security Agency, as your principal operating agent, provide to the Committees on Armed Services and the Select Committees on Intelligence of the Senate and the House of Representatives by March 1, 1985, a report on the status of the measures being implemented to remedy the deficiencies in COMSEC planning and execution and an assessment of the additional funds and personnel which would be required to support a national COMSEC effort.

Major decisions on reorganization should not be made without considering all affected interests, including those of the civilian and private sector as well as the national security community, and without consulting the appropriate congressional committees.

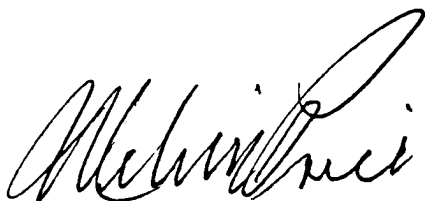
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The Armed Services Committees, in concert with the Intelligence Committees, intend to examine in greater detail the subject of U.S. communications security in connection with congressional review of the fiscal year 1986 budget request.

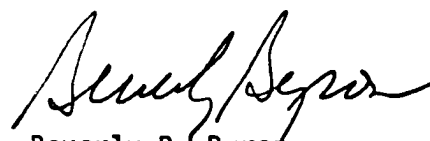
Sincerely,



Melvin Price
Chairman



William L. Dickinson
Ranking Minority Member



Beverly B. Byron
Member of Congress